

# Fernan Lake Road

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PROJECT UPDATE

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## Final EIS Distributed

Most of you received a Summary packet from the Final EIS (FEIS) with this project update. It includes both a 2-page Abstract and 32-page Summary from the FEIS.

FHWA mailed the complete FEIS to 50 agencies, organizations, and companies on the project mailing list. The entire document is available on Internet at <http://www.wfl.fhwa.dot.gov/projects/fernan/>.

You can also read the Final EIS at the East Side Highway District, Forest Service offices in Coeur d'Alene, public libraries in Coeur d'Alene and Spokane, and at other locations listed on page 2 of the Abstract. You can request a copy from FHWA.

## Project Team

The project team consists of the East Side Highway District, Idaho Transportation Department, Idaho Panhandle National Forests, and the Western Federal Lands Highway Division of the Federal Highway Administration. David Evans and Associates, Inc. is the consultant for the current planning and environmental evaluation phase of the project.

## Preferred Alternative

Since the DEIS was prepared, the project team has re-evaluated the three build alternatives and the No Build Alternative. Comments on the DEIS, and preliminary responses to these comments, were reviewed and discussed. The project team met with regulatory and resource agencies to discuss their comments and the respective responses. After these

discussions, the alternatives were once again evaluated relative to the same selection criteria used in the DEIS. Alternative G again was the unanimous choice of the project team as the preferred alternative for the Fernan Lake Road safety improvements.

Identifying a preferred alternative still does not mean FHWA has already decided to build it. NEPA regulations require that the formal Record of Decision not be issued until at least 30 days after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) publishes a notice in the Federal Register that the Final EIS has been distributed.

## Changes Since the Draft EIS

The FEIS contains several new or updated sections and appendices in response to comments on the DEIS. These include:

- A new section 3.13 on cumulative impacts to water quality, wetlands, fish, wildlife, native vegetation and visual quality.
- Additional discussion in Chapter 4 of FHWA's procedures to ensure environmental protection and mitigation are fully implemented.
- The final version of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between FHWA and Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to mitigate adverse effects that would occur if historic Segments 1 and 2 are reconstructed.
- A new Appendix D that presents all of the comments on the DEIS and individual responses to each comment:
- A preliminary conceptual mitigation plan in new Appendix E that discusses how impacts to wetlands and waters of the U.S. would be avoided, minimized, and mitigated.
- Preliminary revegetation plans in a new Appendix F.



Returning creek flow to an old channel on the eastern side of the lower valley (foreground and at right in this photo) is a new mitigation concept discussed in the Final EIS.

### What's Next?

FHWA expects to have its decision documented in the Record of Decision during May. If a build alternative is selected, FHWA will choose an engineering firm to prepare final designs on the road improvements and mitigation.

This spring or early summer, the design team and real estate specialists will meet with each landowner to learn specifics about utilities or other features on the property. The right-of-way acquisition process and landowner rights will be described fully.

Final design will take 18 to 24 months, so construction is expected to start in 2007.

### Public Interest and Support

Thank you for your continuing support and interest in the Fernan Lake Road safety improvement project. Your comments on the project are always welcome. Be sure to let FHWA know if you want the complete FEIS:

- by sending a comment on the project website,
- by email to [fernanlake@wfl.fha.dot.gov](mailto:fernanlake@wfl.fha.dot.gov)
- by phone to **Sajid Aftab, Project Manager**, at 360-619-7700, or
- by mail to Mr. Aftab at FHWA's return address.



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